

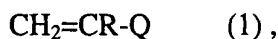
Please amend the above-identified patent application, without prejudice, as follows:

IN THE CLAIMS:

Amend claims 2-8, 10-16, 18-22, 24-26 by replacement as follows:

2. (amended) A method according to claim 1 wherein component (b) is selected from the group consisting of C₈₋₂₀ alkyl mercaptans, C₅₋₇ cycloalkyl mercaptans, aromatic mercaptans, C₈₋₂₀ alkyl sulphones, C₅₋₇ cycloalkyl mercaptans and aromatic sulphones.

a 3. (amended) A method according to claim 1 wherein the oligomer further comprises component (c) which is a compound of formula (1)



wherein

Q is -C(O)-Z-A-, -CH₂-N⁺R₁R₃CH₂CR=CH₂ X⁻ or -CH₂NR₁CH₂CR=CH₂,

Z is -O- or -NH-,

A is -C_nH_{2n}-B-,

n is an integer from 1 to 4,

B is -NR₁R₂ or -N⁺R₁R₂R₃ X⁻,

R is -H or -CH₃,

R₁ is C₁₋₄ alkyl,

R₂ is C₁₋₄ alkyl,

R₃ is -H or C₁₋₈ alkyl, C₅₋₇ cycloalkyl or benzyl, and

X⁻ is an anion.

4. (amended) A method according to claim 1 wherein component (c) is dimethylaminoethyl (meth)acrylate, acid addition salt or quaternary ammonium salt thereof.

5. (amended) A method according to claim 1 wherein the oligomer comprises at least 85 mole % of component (a).

6. (amended) A method according to claim 1 wherein the oligomer comprises component (b) in an amount up to 10 mole %.

a 7. (amended) A method according to claim 1 wherein the oligomer comprises component (c) in an amount up to 10 mole %.

8. (amended) A method according to claim 1 wherein the oligomer further comprises component (d) which is an ethylenically unsaturated carboxylic acid or an ethylenically unsaturated carboxylic anhydride in an amount up to 10 mole %.

a 2 10. (amended) A method according to claim 1 wherein the matrix of the polymeric particles are formed from a monomer or a monomer blend comprising monomers selected from the group consisting of styrene, C₁₋₁₂ alkyl (meth)acrylate, vinyl acetate and acrylonitrile.

11. (amended) A method according to claim 1 wherein the matrix of the polymer particles is formed from 25-75 weight % monomer or monomer blend selected from any of styrene, acrylonitrile, vinyl acetate and

C₁₋₂ alkyl (meth)acrylate, and 25-75 weight % monomer or monomer blend selected from C₃₋₈ alkyl (meth)acrylate.

12. (amended) A method according to claim 1 wherein the matrix of the polymer particles is formed from 25-75 weight styrene and 25-75 weight 2-ethylhexyl acrylate.

13. (amended) A method according to claim 1 wherein the polymer particles are formed from a monomer blend comprising cross linking monomer.

14. (amended) A method according to claim 1 wherein the polymer particles have a minimum film forming temperature of between -5 and 55°C.

15. (amended) A method according to claim 1 wherein the polymer particles have a particle size in the range 80-200nm.

16. (amended) A method according to claim 1 wherein the composition (A) comprises 0.5 to 10 weight %polymer particles and 90 to 99.5 weight %, starch based on total dry weight of polymer particles and starch.

18. (amended) A method according to claim 17 wherein the composition comprises an aqueous dispersion of polymeric particles of particle size up to 1 micron, wherein the polymeric particles comprise a water insoluble polymer matrix, and the oligomer is located at the surface of the polymer particles.

19. (amended) A method according to claim 17 wherein the oligomer is formed from a monomer blend comprising,

- (a) 85-95 mole % (meth)acrylamide,
- (b) 2.5-10 mole % of an organic mercaptan or an organic sulphone, ,
- (c) 2.5-10 mole % of an ethylenically unsaturated monomer comprising either a tertiary amine group or a quaternary ammonium group, and
- (d) 0-10 mole% other ethylenically unsaturated monomers.

20. (amended) A method according to claim 17 wherein the composition comprises 0.5 to 10 weight %polymer particles and 90 to 99.5 weight %, starch based on total dry weight of polymer particles and starch.

21. (amended) A method according to claim 17 wherein the composition comprises optical brightening aids.

22. (amended) A composition comprising an aqueous dispersion of polymeric particles of particle size up to 1 micron, wherein the polymeric particles comprise a water insoluble polymer matrix, characterized in that an oligomer formed from a monomer blend comprising,

- a³
- (a) 85-95 mole % (meth)acrylamide and
 - (b) 2.5-10 mole % of an organic mercaptan or an organic sulphone, and
 - (c) 2.5-10 mole % of an ethylenically unsaturated monomer comprising either a tertiary amine group or a quaternary ammonium group, and
 - (d) 0-10 mole% other ethylenically unsaturated monomers, preferably acrylic acid or maleic anhydride,

is located at the surface of the polymer particles.

a⁴

24. (amended) A composition according to claim 22, wherein component (b) is dodecyl mercaptan or dodecyl sulphone, present in an amount of 2.5-5 mole % based on total oligomer.

25. (amended) A composition according to claim 22, wherein component (c) is dimethylaminoethyl methacrylate, present in an amount of 2.5-5 mole % based on total oligomer.

26. (amended) A composition according to claim 22, wherein component (d) is acrylic acid or maleic anhydride, present in an amount of 2.5-5 mole % based on total oligomer.
